

Management Alternatives for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area feasibility study

PROPOSED OPTIONS May 2011

National Heritage Area (NHA) feasibility studies, as recommended by National Park Service guidelines, should include management alternatives and preliminary assessments of impacts. A minimum of two alternatives should be discussed: continuation of current practices and a NHA designation. This document outlines four different management alternatives: Continuation of current practices, a Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA, a Delta State Heritage Area/Corridor, and a locally designated Delta Heritage Area.

After public review and subsequent modification, this document will be incorporated into the Delta NHA feasibility study. Input from local stakeholders is highly encouraged. Interested persons can email comments to Alex Westhoff of the Delta Protection Commission at alex.westhoff@delta.ca.gov or call (916) 776-2290, no later than July 15th, 2011. This document will also be discussed at a public meeting which will be scheduled for mid-July, 2011.

Option 1 – Continuation of current practices

No federal designation or additional authority for federal involvement/funding would be pursued under this option. Efforts for historic preservation, signage, economic development, public education, marketing, and other goals of a Delta NHA can continue to be pursued under their current auspices. The resources currently owned and operated by nonprofits, and local, state, and federal government would continue to be maintained and made available for public use under existing policies. There would be no new National Park Service (NPS) program dedicated exclusively to providing technical assistance and no additional federal funding. State and local government, private nonprofit organizations and foundations, and for-profit organizations would continue to be the primary sources of funds for the protection and interpretation of heritage resources in the Delta.

Option 2 – Creation of a Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA

This management alternative involves congressional designation of a NHA in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Under this alternative, the National Park Service would provide technical assistance to the management entity of the NHA, the Delta would achieve national recognition as a place of special significance, and receive federal seed money, which could reach one million dollars per year or more for up to 10 years, to undertake the projects outlined in the management plan which may include interpretive signage, historic preservation, and regional branding.

Designation as a NHA would give national recognition to the role of the Delta in American history, and draw attention to the importance of the Delta as both an ecological and a cultural landscape. A NHA could help gain visibility of the Delta as a destination nationally and internationally, which can lead to economic development opportunities. Currently, most of the heritage tourism attractions in the Delta, such as museums, have limited hours and staffing due to funding, and a Delta NHA could help expand these activities due to an increase in visitation. NHA designation may draw more attention to the historic assets of the Delta which are of value to the families who have lived in the region for generations, and these significant assets could benefit from the visitors dollar for restoration, maintenance, and enhancement. An increase in visibility could help increase the number of visitors to state parks and recreation areas in the Delta, which could lead to an improvement the area's amenities.

A Delta NHA would acquire seed money which could be used to leverage funds from other public and private sources. On average, existing NHA management entities leverage \$8 of funds for every \$1 of federal seed money. As the Delta is in close proximity to a variety of potential funding sources in the urban centers which surround it, a Delta management entity could also likely obtain the same amount of seed money which other NHAs have been able to. A Delta NHA can be an opportunity to develop valuable partnerships to seek funding for projects which are decided upon by the management entity and its partners.

As stated in the mission statement, a Delta NHA can serve as an opportunity to recognize, enhance, and promote 'Delta-as-place' in order to help cultivate and retain appreciation and understanding by residents and visitors of the Delta. For quite some time, the Delta has been a lesser known region of California, and even persons who live as close as the Bay Area and Sacramento know little about the Delta. A Delta NHA can be a valuable tool to educate the public about the Delta.

Option 3 – California Delta Heritage Corridor (State Designated)

California State Parks developed a Central Valley Vision Implementation Plan in 2009. This plan recommends establishing five Central Valley driving routes as heritage corridors to bring visitors to some of the valuable heritage resources in the Central Valley. One of the recommended heritage corridors is the California Delta Heritage Corridor, which would link historic Delta towns, recreation sites, ecotourism areas, and agritourism sites. These heritage corridors would be designated under the California Recreational Trails Act, as provided in Public Resources Code Section 5070.3, 5071, and 5073.

Several other states, including Maryland, New York and Pennsylvania have state heritage area programs, and further research could be done on these programs to inform the development of a state designated California Delta Heritage Corridor. A

State heritage corridor would, if funds were available, have some of the same potential benefits as a NHA; improved visitor information (maps, wayfinding signs and kiosks, brochures, etc) and education about the corridor's historical, natural, and recreational assets, which may encourage rural tourism which could assist with economic development. Like a NHA, a state heritage corridor could be a valuable tool to educate persons about the Delta and could help recognize, enhance and promote 'Delta-as-place'. NPS staff would not play an advisory role (unless assistance is granted through a different program). A state heritage corridor would not be eligible for the seed money that is granted with NHA designation, and there are no apparent sources of state funds to support its planning or implementation now. It could still be a valuable symbol of Delta organizations' desire to develop partnerships and seek funding from other public/private sources, if local partners choose to use it as a vehicle for those activities.

The state heritage corridor designation could still be pursued for the Delta, regardless of whether or not the Delta receives NHA designation. While planning for it would require a separate process, the Delta NHA feasibility study could serve as a valuable reference, as it contains information that is potentially relevant to both designations, such as proposed themes, heritage area resources, visions, missions, goals, etc.

Option 4 – Locally Designated Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Heritage Area

A final option is a Delta Heritage Area (DHA) which is designated, planned and managed by a local entity. Like a NHA, projects could be undertaken, such as historic preservation and interpretive signage which recognize, enhance, and promote 'Delta-as-place.' Projects which increase visitor amenities in the Delta, such as public restrooms, waste receptacles, and directional signage could still be developed. Like the state heritage corridor option, a DHA would not be eligible for the federal financial assistance, or the NPS partnership that NHAs are eligible for, but federal resources and assistance could still be sought through other programs. A DHA would not receive the national recognition that a NHA would, or the statewide recognition that a state heritage corridor would, but would still enable the Delta to gain more visibility as a region, which could lead to economic and educational benefits. A DHA would not have to obtain Congressional approval, or go through annual congressional funding cycles, and therefore could likely be initiated more quickly than a NHA.

Like a NHA, the DHA management entity should have representation from the diverse local stakeholder groups within the DHA boundaries. If interest is expressed on potential pursuit of this option, than its feasibility could be analyzed and its management structure could be further discussed.

For more information on the feasibility study for a National Heritage Area in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, please see: <http://www.delta.ca.gov/heritage.htm>